Austin DSA Socialist Night School

Readings, Lectures, Lesson Plans, etc.

Background
In November 2019 Austin DSA relaunched our Socialist Night School Program.

Socialist Night School is Austin DSA's regular, introductory, community political education program. Readings for each event consist of a few articles or a single pamphlet. Socialist Night School also serves as a membership development program, by working with members to

Event Structure
The meeting begins with an introduction from the host and an explanation of what Socialist Night School is and why it's important (i.e. to collectively learn from the history of class struggle and apply the lessons to our ongoing work). A speaker then delivers a 10-25 minute lecture, and then attendees are divided into discussion groups, each with a trained facilitator/moderator. After breakout groups, we reconvene and hear about upcoming opportunities to get involved with the work of our chapter.

Austin DSA Night Schools

Table of Contents

1. November 2019: What is Democratic Socialism?

2. December 2019: Why "Progressive" Isn't Enough

3. January 2020: MLK, Democratic Socialist Extraordinaire

4. February 2020: Bernie 2020 and Class Struggle

5. March 2020: Labor History

6. April 2020 Week 1: A Socialist Response to Coronavirus

7. April 2020 Week 2: The Rank and File Strategy

8-10. March 2020 Week 3-5: The ABC's of Capitalism

1. November 2019: What is Democratic Socialism?
Introductory Texts
"What is Democratic Socialism?" by Neal Meyer. This Jacobin article, written by a DSA member, spells out the basics of democratic socialism, especially how it differs from

liberalism and social democracy. It also names many of the challenges democratic socialists face, and what we can do to get past them.

"Democratic Socialism Explained" by Meagan Day. This Vox article, also written by a DSA member, explains why socialists want to go beyond reforming and regulating capitalism.

Class and Democratic Socialist Strategy
"Electoral Politics, Class Formation, and Socialist Strategy" by Chris Maisano in Socialist Forum. Socialist Forum is a DSA quarterly publication. Maisano makes the case for how and why democratic socialists today should approach electoral politics.

"Why Class Struggle is Central" by Ellen Wood. Ellen Wood was a political theorist and here she makes a case for why socialists emphasize class and class struggle.

"What Sanders' Political Revolution Looks Like in Real Life" from Politico. Bernie Sanders, a democratic socialist, is engaging with the American working class in a fundamentally different way than any other politician. Why, and to what end?

Discussion Questions
1. Before these readings, what did you think was meant by "democratic socialism? How did these readings line up with your understanding?
2. According to the texts, what are the key features of socialism? What problems of existing society do socialists seek to solve, and how do they propose to solve them?
3. What is class and why does it matter?
4. How do democratic socialists approach electoral politics? How does our approach differ from the conventional understanding of American politics as a tug of war between Democrats and Republicans?

2. December 2019: Why "Progressive" Isn't Enough
Speech from Austin DSA member and congressional primary candidate Heidi Sloan
https://upload.latest.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=2626819587434095&ref=watch_permalink

Readings
- Why We're Socialists, Not "Progressives", Natasha Fernández-Silber
https://jacobinmag.com/2019/07/socialism-progressives-liberalism

- Why the Differences Between Sanders and Warren Matter, Zaid Jilani
https://jacobinmag.com/2019/01/elizabeth-warren-bernie-sanders-socialism-progressives

- Accountable Capitalism or Democratic Socialism?, Stephen Maher
https://jacobinmag.com/2018/09/elizabeth-warren-accountable-capitalism-stakeholder

3. January 2020: MLK, Democratic Socialist Extraordinaire
Speech from Austin DSA member Tandera Louie
https://youtu.be/ZzWOgR-aJTU?t=13

Readings
The Forgotten Socialist History of Martin Luther King Jr., Matthew Miles Goodrich, In These Times
http://inthesetimes.com/article/20839/martin-luther-king-jr-day-socialism-capitalism

Remembering King's roots in labor and socialist movements of the 20th century, Nathan Newman, Monthly Review Online
https://mronline.org/2018/01/14/remembering-kings-roots-in-labor-and-socialist-movements-of-the-20th-century/

The Legacy of Martin Luther King, Lee Sustar, Socialist Worker
https://socialistworker.org/2012/12/14/legacy-of-martin-luther-king

Nonviolence and Social Change, Martin Luther King, Jr., Lecture in 1967
https://www.jacobinmag.com/2018/04/martin-luther-king-jr-nonviolence-direct-action

Programs and Prospects, Martin Luther King, Jr., Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1J5LyqHIh2Cy5LQQr75RZWCWcfmccWtVA/view

4. February 2020: Bernie 2020 and Class Struggle
Speech by Austin DSA member and Political Education Coordinator Ashkan Jahangiri
https://medium.com/@AustinDSA/bernie-2020-and-class-struggle-8367b90a8b7e

Discussion Questions and Facilitator's Guide
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GoFKDmavhKwjPQojUz1zDhFNhHTxMNFL80nM18ggrdM/edit

Readings
"Why the Working Class?" by Vivek Chibber, Jacobin
https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/03/working-class-capitalism-socialists-strike-power/

"Electoral Politics, Class Formation, and Socialist Strategy," by Chris Maisano, Socialist Forum
https://socialistforum.dsausa.org/issues/spring-summer-2019/electoral-politics-class-formation-and-socialist-strategy/

"The Political Revolution Goes to Work," by Jane Slaughter, Socialist Forum
https://socialistforum.dsausa.org/issues/fall-2018/the-political-revolution-goes-to-work/

"Engines of Solidarity," by Robbie Nelson, Jacobin
https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/11/donald-trump-democratic-party-welfare-state

5. March 2020: Labor History
Readings
The Forgotten Militants, Charlie Post, Jacobin
https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/08/the-forgotten-militants

The Study of American Labor, Kim Moody, Jacobin
https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/06/precariat-labor-us-workers-uber-walmart-gig-economy/

Reviving Labor from Below, Kim Moody, Jacobin
https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/04/reviving-labor-from-below

Beyond Social Movement Unionism, Sam Gindin, Jacobin
https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/08/beyond-social-movement-unionism

Discussion Questions (from the facilitator's guide)
In intros, ask everyone how they're feeling in response to the crisis.

Have you ever had opportunities to pursue workplace organizing? What about now, in the context of this pandemic?

Why is workplace resistance to capitalist exploitation so weak?

Why do workers need unions?

Has anyone been in a union?

What are the limitations of unions, and how does that lead us to the conclusion that we need a working class party?

6. April 2020 Week 1: A Socialist Response to Coronavirus
Speech by Ashkan
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1g2yo3hOzsUw3xZZ_JtFQvFlHPuOhgERlA-J-fxnx4Yc/edit

Readings and Video
"Mike Davis on Coronavirus: "In a Plague Year"", Mike Davis, Jacobin
https://jacobinmag.com/2020/03/mike-davis-coronavirus-outbreak-capitalism-left-international-solidarity

DSA Coronavirus Bulletin #5
https://www.dsausa.org/news/dsa-covid-19-bulletin-5/

"Go on Strike for Your Health and Safety", Ryan Bruckenthal, Jacobin
https://jacobinmag.com/2020/3/new-york-city-public-school-teacher-organizing

"Coronavirus Capitalism — and How to Beat It", Naomi Klein, YouTube video, 9 minutes, The Intercept
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niwNTI9Nqd8&feature=youtu.be

7. April 2020 Week 2: The Rank and File Strategy
Speech by Ashkan Jahangri
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1aZRde0U3fEFAAJcLO0I4x7R63Lfi5Wh5FjXb5cQvDY4/edit?usp=sharing

Readings
What is the Rank-and-File Strategy, and Why Does It Matter?, by Barry Eidlin
https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/03/rank-and-file-strategy-union-organizing

We Need to Reconnect Socialists to the US Labor Movement, an interview with Eric Blanc
https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/08/eric-blanc-labor-movement-militant-minority-red-state-revolt

The Rank-and-File Strategy and the Trade Union Bureaucracy, by Joe Evica
https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/09/rank-and-file-strategy-trade-union-bureaucracy-labor-movement

Did Bernie's Campaign Lead to the Teachers Strikes? by Eric Blanc
https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/11/bernie-sanders-teachers-strike-wave-chicago-union-red-state-revolt

8-10. March 2020 Week 3-5: The ABC's of Capitalism
Main Folder of All Materials Below
https://drive.google.com/open?id=1N3B0Hm7b6RLLmANMXS_piTK97DEWcMdR

Lectures from Seattle DSA (We ended up using our own)
https://drive.google.com/open?id=1JjJilPG2Tq7AG0NxOxtFbXb6TI8iXQhY

Readings
The ABC's of Capitalism, shared with permission from Chibber
https://drive.google.com/open?id=1pW7I4CVqvKtecj6KoM-iJqMx35TgX5WT

Discussion Questions (With and Without Answers)
https://drive.google.com/open?id=1HltbHP5t6xNdzvzQNfCIoAvO0kgCxOgZ

11. May 20, 2020: Class Struggle and The Green New Deal
Readings
Plan, Mood, Battlefield – Reflections on the Green New Deal, Thea Riofrancos, Viewpoint Magazine
https://www.viewpointmag.com/2019/05/16/plan-mood-battlefield-reflections-on-the-green-new-deal/

A Class Struggle Strategy for a Green New Deal, Multiple authors, Socialist Forum
https://socialistforum.dsausa.org/issues/winter-2019/a-class-struggle-strategy-for-a-green-new-deal/